

**Scalloway Playgroup
Shetland
13 January 2010**

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects centres in order to let parents¹, children and the local community know whether their centre provides a good education. Inspectors also discuss with centre staff how they can improve the quality of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the head of centre and staff about the strengths of the centre, what needs to improve, and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan what we are going to look at. During the inspection, we go into playrooms and join other activities which children are involved in. We also gather the views of parents, staff and members of the local community. We find their views very helpful and use them together with the other information we have collected to arrive at our view of the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the centre. We describe how well children are doing, how good the centre is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the centre. We also comment on how well the centre works with other groups in the community, including services which support children. Finally, we focus on how well the centre is led and how all staff help the centre achieve its aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the centre, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Here you can find analyses of questionnaire returns from parents and staff. We will not provide questionnaire analyses where the numbers of returns are so small that they could identify individuals. Where applicable, you will also be able to find descriptions of good practice in the centre.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers and carers who are relatives or friends

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1. The centre

Scalloway Playgroup was inspected in November 2009 by HMIE on behalf of both HMIE and the Care Commission as part of the integrated inspection programme. The centre caters for pre-school children aged two to four years. It is registered for 28 children attending at any one session. The total roll was 18 at the time of the inspection.

2. Particular strengths of the centre

- Children who are enthusiastic and motivated in their learning.
- Quality of staff interaction with children in supporting their learning.
- Playgroup's partnership with other provision in the community.
- Leadership of the playgroup manager and effective teamwork of staff.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

Children are motivated, enthusiastic and are gaining a high level of success in their learning. They interact very well in group activities and are good at turn taking and sharing.

Children are developing their computer skills to access early literacy and numeracy programmes to support their learning. They make good use of cameras to photograph and record their activities in the playgroup and local environment. Children have a good understanding of why it is important to eat healthily and take care of themselves.

Children are making very good progress in their learning and development. They confidently talk with each other during play and with adults about their learning. A few children can describe previous learning experiences very well. Children's listening skills are appropriate to their stage of development as they listen to stories attentively and carry out simple instructions. Almost all children can recognise their name and identify a few sounds and words. Children are confident and successful in attempting to write their name, make

notes and write about what they are doing. Most children can sort and match by colour, shape, texture and size. Children have a very good understanding of early number as they confidently count and use numbers appropriately while playing games and doing activities. Most children have a good awareness of shape and successfully identify them when exploring their local environment. They use early mathematical language appropriately when making comparisons of size and weight, for example when discussing their collection of different fruits and vegetables. Children have good problem-solving skills as they approach challenges confidently when playing with measuring containers in the water tray and during energetic play.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

The curriculum is firmly based on different types of play and active learning. Staff provide very good experiences which are challenging and stimulating and which support children's learning and development. There are very good opportunities for children to practise their early literacy and numeracy skills in play situations and when carrying out practical tasks such as preparing snack. The computer is used effectively to support children's learning in different areas of the curriculum, for example to access games about healthy eating and number recognition. Children have very good experiences to develop their investigative skills through early science activities as they explore their local environment. Children take part in a variety of activities which enables them to develop their creativity, for example making models, painting, music and imaginative play. Very good use is made of outdoors as children spend lots of time exploring aspects of their local environment such as the beach. They have very good opportunities for energetic play in the local community park as well as indoors. Staff ensure that children take part in a range of activities which support them in gaining experiences and have an awareness about different cultures, festivals, changes brought about by seasons and the importance of recycling. Staff have made a very good beginning at using *Curriculum for Excellence* to support them in planning learning experiences for children.

Staff are very good at meeting children's learning needs as they are focused on enabling children to be successful in their learning. They support children extremely well, using questions effectively to make children think and become more aware of what they want to learn next. Children who need additional support in their learning are very well supported. Staff work with appropriate agencies when this is required.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

Staff work extremely well with others to support children's learning, making good use of the community police, fire service, library and the museum in Lerwick, where children find out about Shetland and their local culture. Staff have a very good partnership with the local school, working effectively on a number of transition activities throughout the year. There are very good links with the mother and toddler group and 'Hame Fae Hame' which help children and parents transferring to the playgroup. Staff work well with the local authority and are appreciative of the support which they receive in developing the work of the playgroup.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their centre community?

The playgroup manager has developed a very good self-evaluation process with staff which focuses on continuous improvement of the work of the playgroup. Staff are very reflective in their practice as they observe children during their play and use the information collected to plan effectively for what children will learn next. Children are involved in the work of the centre as they have opportunities to plan learning experiences and snack menus. Staff consult with parents about the work of the playgroup and take their views into account.

6. Does the centre have high expectation of all children?

Staff encourage children to make healthy choices in eating and drinking. Children are made aware of the importance of looking after themselves, for example by washing their hands and cleaning their teeth. Staff support children very well in their learning and use praise and encouragement appropriately, giving children a feeling of being valued and successful in their learning. All staff are aware of safeguarding and child protection procedures.

7. Does the centre have a clear sense of direction?

The playgroup manager provides very good leadership. She and the staff have a very clear focus on developing the work of the playgroup. With continued support from the local authority, the playgroup is in a very good position to continue to improve provision for children.

8. What happens next?

As a result of the very good quality of education provided by the playgroup, we will make no further visits in connection with this inspection. The education authority will inform parents about the playgroup's progress as part of the authority's arrangements for reporting to parents on the quality of its centres.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the centre and education authority.

- Plan and develop the outdoor environment involving children and parents.
- Continue to revise the curriculum in line with local and national guidance.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the centre there were two recommendations. Both recommendations have since been addressed.

Quality indicators help centres, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a centre. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *The Child at the Centre*. Following the inspection of each centre, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish centres are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Scalloway Playgroup.

Improvements in performance	very good
Children's experiences	very good
Meeting learning needs	very good

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the centre.

The curriculum	very good
Improvement through self-evaluation	very good

Managing Inspector: Gordon Buchanan
13 January 2010

When we write reports, we use the following word scale so that our readers can see clearly what our judgments mean.

excellent	means	outstanding, sector leading
very good	means	major strengths
good	means	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	means	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	means	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	means	major weaknesses

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You can also contact the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, telephone 0845 603 0890.

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